

Tackling Racism As Accountable Business Leaders

By Anthea Kelsick, Co-CEO, B Lab U.S. & Canada

Dear B Corp Community,

One week ago, I sat with my family on Memorial Day sharing our grief and rage of the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 and unprecedented unemployment on the lives of Black people. We shared our continued grief and rage about the murders of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor as the latest instances of systemic violence against Black lives. And as we were already fatigued from our community dying from a virus, from livelihoods crumbling from lost jobs, from lives being stolen, a new round of videos surfaced. The brazen murder of George Floyd by a policeman aided by other officers who stood by watching. The painful loss of Tony McDade, a Black trans man killed by police in Florida. In New York, a white woman who called the police on a Black man in a racist attack. And then the painful revelation that an Indigenous man Jason Collins and an Indigenous woman Eishia Hudson were killed by police within 12 hours of each other in the Canadian city of Winnipeg just weeks earlier.

“As a Black woman, these events are a never-ending trauma. I don’t have a choice to ignore them.”

As a Black woman, these events are a never-ending trauma. I don’t have a choice to ignore them. I can’t help but see my husband or father or brother or son ending up dead like George Floyd at the hands of police with a knee in their neck or bullet in their back. Or see my daughter or sister being shot to death while sleeping at home like Breonna Taylor. Or see my nephew, an incredible athlete who’s graduating from high school this week, be afraid of running in his neighborhood for fear of being shot like Ahmaud Arbery.

This is deeply personal. And I. am. enraged. Enraged at the people and police who continue to kill Black people. At a system of pervasive racism that continues to terrorize Black

people. And at those in public office who make excuses instead of take action, or worse defend racialized violence.

I also know I am not alone. To the Black people in our B Corp community: I see you. To our Black business leaders, B Local leaders, and B Academics leaders: I see you. And to Dismantle Collective: I see you, and extend my deep gratitude for the brave, powerful and incredibly important work you do as B Corps dismantling white supremacy.

These events are not simply the result of individual actions by bad people, they are born out of a system of structural racism that infects our society. If we want progress - if we want to be part of a solution that moves us toward a system that is truly inclusive, equitable and empowers all people - then we must talk about race and take action to dismantle racism and white supremacy.

At B Lab U.S. & Canada we are ready to step up our work. When I stepped into my role as Co-CEO earlier this year, we made a commitment to go on the journey of becoming an anti-racist organization. We recognize that it is not enough to be quietly non-racist, and that we have a responsibility to become vocal, visible anti-racist leaders. This journey will be guided by Dr. Sloane Kali Faye, our Director of Inclusive Economies, and Dr. Ellonda Green, our Director of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion, in partnership with experts both within and outside our community. The journey begins with a mandatory curriculum for all of our staff that includes ‘How to Be An Anti-Racist’ by leading anti-racist scholar Ibram X. Kendi, and we invite you to join us in that reading.

“We cannot credibly build an inclusive economic system without addressing the fundamental injustice, inequity, and violence that disproportionately impacts Black people and other People of Color.”

As a community of B Corps there is also work to do. We cannot credibly build an inclusive economic system without addressing the fundamental injustice, inequity and violence that disproportionately impacts Black people and other People of Color. Racism is pervasive in the very systems in which our businesses operate and in our communities, and it is only

when we center People of Color that we will truly benefit everyone. It has been encouraging to see that evolution occur in parts of our community, including the B Corp Climate Collective which has evolved their mission from Climate Action to Climate Justice.

So how will our community collectively step into this next conversation? We have been inspired to see how B Corps met the moment of COVID-19. This crisis needs you too. As a network of business leaders that is currently majority white, we sit in a structurally privileged position to learn from others, to transform ourselves, and to be leaders of change.

We don't have to be perfect to start. But we do need to be vocal and bring explicit conversations about race and racism to all of our stakeholders - the people inside our companies, our customers and our communities. Let's ask ourselves -- what am I doing today?

- *How am I educating myself and my stakeholders about structural racism?*
- *How am I holding space to allow for conversations about structural racism in my company?*
- *What practices does my company have in place to support Black and People of Color team members?*
- *How am I supporting Black and People of Color business leaders that are in the B Corp community or other communities I'm a part of?*
- *How am I supporting civic engagement to hold public leaders accountable and tackle structural racism in our systems of government?*

It's ok to not have all the answers to these questions. It is not ok for us to avoid seeking answers, or to avoid challenging ourselves and each other. We must go on a journey, together, to take action.

In the coming weeks, with the support of leaders from both within and outside our community, we will be finding ways to engage B Corps on these questions and many others. And we need your help. What are you doing to support racial justice? How are you finding support and space for yourself? What partners are you working with? What expertise can you share with the B Corp community? For those that can, what resources are you able to offer? How can we help you take action? Please email us at community@bcorporation.net to share your experiences, needs and offers.

“...Let’s get to work tackling racism by developing ourselves and each other in order to become accountable leaders.”



We are grateful for all of the leaders in our community, and in other movements, who are leading the way on taking action against racism. As a B Corp community we have always gone beyond rhetoric to take meaningful action. So let’s get to work tackling racism by developing ourselves and each other in order to become the accountable leaders needed to build a truly just, equitable and inclusive economic system.

In community,

Anthea Kelsick
Co-CEO, B Lab U.S. & Canada

The team at B Lab U.S. & Canada has compiled ways to step up in your organization and as an individual. Visit our anti-racism resources center to learn more **here**.

**Our initial publishing of this letter had previously incorrectly stated that Jason Collins is a Black man, he is an Indigenous man.*

Article Credit: B Corps

<https://bcorporation.net/tackling-racism-accountable-business-leaders>